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ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN LA UNION

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ABSTRACT
This study looked at faculty members' awareness and the challenges they face in implementing Gender and Development (GAD) programs at a higher education institution. A mixed-method approach was used, involving survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data evaluated awareness in seven areas: gender equality and equity, gender-based violence, inclusive policy development, education and awareness, health and well-being, gender-responsive governance, and participation in leadership and politics. Qualitative responses offered deeper insights into faculty views. The findings showed generally high levels of awareness, especially in gender-responsive governance and participation in leadership. However, gaps appeared between awareness and actual practice. Three main themes were identified: persistent gender stereotypes and cultural barriers, weak institutional mechanisms and inconsistent policy implementation, and limited sustainability of gender programs and support systems. The study concludes that while faculty awareness of GAD is strong, structural and cultural challenges persist. Institutionalizing sustainable initiatives is crucial for turning awareness into inclusive practice.
KEYWORDS: *Awareness, Challenges, Gender, Development, Faculty*

INTRODUCTION

Gender and Development (GAD) is an approach that aims to address the structural gaps and inequalities that different genders face in society. It goes beyond seeing women as just beneficiaries of development. Instead, it emphasizes the active role of both men and women in promoting equality. The framework shows that gender equality is not only a social issue but also essential for sustainable and inclusive progress. By including gender perspectives in education, employment, politics, and health, GAD seeks to break down barriers that stop individuals from reaching their full potential (Chaudhuri, 2020).

Globally, GAD has become a key part of policy-making and development planning. Organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank stress that gender equality is vital for social and economic growth. This emphasis is seen in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which focuses on gender equality and empowering all women and girls (United Nations, 2015). However, despite these international commitments, gaps in gender awareness and practices still exist in various societies and institutions (UN Women, 2020). This situation shows the urgent need for ongoing research and local initiatives to ensure that policies are put into action effectively.

Although there have been numerous efforts at both global and national levels, many studies show that awareness and understanding of gender issues are still inconsistent.

Literature Review

Globally, there has been significant progress in including gender perspectives in governance and education, but challenges remain in achieving equal awareness and understanding. A report by UN Women (2020) noted that while gender equality policies are present in many countries, their implementation often fails due to cultural barriers, a lack of resources, and insufficient training for educators. Despite strong international commitments, their reach and impact on specific groups like teachers and faculty members are inconsistent.

Research indicates that awareness campaigns at the international level vary in effectiveness. In developed countries, structured training programs and widespread advocacy have led to higher awareness and engagement (Chaudhuri, 2020). However, in many developing nations, gender sensitivity and gender and development (GAD) awareness among educators and institutions remain low on the priority list. Educators, including faculty members, often find it difficult to integrate gender perspectives into their teaching and professional roles wheh because they have limited exposure to such frameworks (Ferrer-Fons & Osborne, 2021).

This uneven distribution of awareness highlights the need for localized research. Relying solely on broad global initiatives is not enough; countries and local communities should conduct their own assessments of GAD awareness among educators. By doing this, policies and training programs can be tailored to meet the specific needs of faculty members. This approach ensures that they are not

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only aware of gender issues but are also ready to translate that awareness into meaningful action within their academic institutions (UNESCO, 2019).

In the Philippines, gender mainstreaming has become a key part of laws and policies aimed at promoting inclusivity. The Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710) guarantees women's rights and requires the government to take active steps to eliminate discrimination (Philippine Commission on Women [PCW], 2009). Additionally, the Philippine Development Plan and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Orders stress the need for implementing Gender and Development (GAD) programs across various sectors, including education (CHED, 2015). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are specifically responsible for creating environments where gender sensitivity is both taught and practiced, supporting the country's overall development goals. Despite these strong legal frameworks, research shows gaps in awareness and understanding. PCW (2021) reports that while most state universities and colleges (SUCs) have developed GAD Plans, many do not fully implement them due to institutional challenges like limited resources or lack of faculty involvement. Some schools carry out regular gender sensitivity training and awareness programs, but others find it hard to maintain these efforts (Bulan & Monterola, 2019). These differences highlight the challenges of turning policies into action at the institutional level.

The role of faculty members is vital in this context. They serve not only as sources of information but also as role models who can influence students' views on gender equality. If faculty members lack awareness or encounter obstacles in applying GAD, this shortcoming directly impacts the institution's ability to promote inclusivity (Sarmiento, 2018). Thus, looking at the national context shows both achievements and ongoing issues, emphasizing the need for ongoing research into how faculty members engage with GAD principles and how these can be strengthened through professional development and institutional support.

At the local level, La Union has made efforts to introduce gender-sensitive policies and programs through government agencies and non-government organizations. Initiatives like seminars, community activities, and GAD programs aim to raise awareness about gender equality. However, initial data and personal accounts indicate awareness levels among faculty members in the province. are inconsistent (University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies, 2020). Some faculty are well-informed and actively join GAD-related programs, while others are less involved, often due to a lack of training opportunities, limited information sharing, or the belief that GAD is less important than their academic duties.

A study by the University of the Philippines showed that in many areas, knowledge about gender-related laws and programs among educators is still limited (UP CWS, 2020). This limited understanding reinforces gender stereotypes and creates obstacles to building an inclusive academic culture. Additionally, according to Batangas City Division study (2024), it highlights that basic education personnel were aware of GAD initiatives and strategic approaches but still face implementation awareness. This highlights the gap between policy creation and local implementation that needs attention.

Understanding these local dynamics is important because faculty members play a key role in integrating GAD principles into the curriculum, classroom practices, and school culture. Their level of awareness directly affects how students and communities develop gender-sensitive views. By identifying the challenges faculty face in La Union, such as limited training, lack of support, or resistance to gender issues, this study can offer insights that are important locally and beneficial to the wider national and global effort for gender equality.

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

This study was based on Gender Socialization Theory. This theory suggests that people learn and adopt societal norms about gender roles through different influences, such as family, education, and media. It explains how individuals, including educators, take in societal gender norms through their educational and professional experiences. Faculty members, like students, are molded by these influences. Their understanding of gender issues often traces back to their own socialization. This theory helps examine how faculty views on gender equality are formed and how these views affect their roles in the academic setting.

Additionally, the study drew from the Empowerment Framework. This framework centers on how people gain control over their lives and decisions, which is essential for understanding how faculty can actively promote gender equality. By looking at how faculty awareness of gender issues leads to empowerment, this study can evaluate how faculty members turn that awareness into action, whether through inclusive teaching practices, advocacy, or creating a fair learning environment.

Together, these frameworks help explore how faculty awareness of gender issues leads to positive changes in attitudes and actions within the academic context. This focus is particularly relevant to gender and development matters. It highlights how individuals and communities, especially marginalized groups, can take action to challenge societal norms and injustices.

Significance of the Study

This study was beneficial to several group. Faculty members gained greater awareness of the various issues related to gender and development, enabling them to better integrate these concepts into their teaching and professional practices. Universities in La Union will use this study as a reference in designing and proposing programs that aimed to enhance students' awareness and

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understanding of gender-related concerns. Furthermore, future researchers will utilize this study as a foundation for further investigation, allowing them to expand on its findings and explore more in-depth aspects that were beyond the scope of the present research.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender, years of service as faculty members, and trainings attended related to Gender and Development (GAD). It also sought to assess the level of awareness of the respondents on gender and development across several key areas, including gender equity and equality, elimination of gender-based violence, inclusive policy development, education and awareness, health and well-being, as well as gender-responsive governance and participation in leadership and politics. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify whether there was a significant difference in the level of awareness on gender and development when respondents were grouped according to their demographic profile. Lastly, it intended to determine the challenges encountered by the respondents in relation to the gender and development issues.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design, which combines quantitative and qualitative research methods. This design has two clear phases: first, collecting and analyzing quantitative data, and then collecting and analyzing qualitative data. The goal is to use the qualitative phase to explain or interpret the results from the quantitative phase, offering a deeper understanding of the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). In this study, the researchers first used quantitative methods, followed by the qualitative phase.

Research Method

The researcher adopted a mixed-methods approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to achieve a comprehensive examination of the research problem. The quantitative phase entailed the collection and analysis of numerical data through surveys to identify significant patterns and relationships among key variables. In contrast, the qualitative phase involved conducting interviews to elicit participants' perspectives and provide additional depth and context to the quantitative results. The integration of these methods enhanced the validity of the findings through data triangulation and facilitated a more nuanced and robust interpretation of the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Population of the Study

The population comprised faculty members from two private higher education institutions in La Union: the Polytechnic College of La Union and the Philippine College of Northwestern Luzon. The inclusion criteria covered full-time and part-time faculty members who were actively engaged in teaching, while administrative staff, non-teaching personnel, and faculty members on leave were excluded. Using purposive-total sampling, all eligible faculty members were invited to participate to ensure broad representation across academic disciplines and levels of teaching experience.

A total of 114 faculty members participated in the survey, with 63 from the Polytechnic College of La Union and 51 from the Philippine College of Northwestern Luzon. Additionally, 10 faculty members—five from each institution—were selected as key informants for the qualitative phase. Their contributions provided deeper insights and supported the triangulation of the quantitative results.

To maintain data consistency, the 25 faculty members who participated in the pilot testing were excluded from the main sample, ensuring that the number of respondents reported in the results reflected only the finalized survey data.

Table 1. ***Population of the Study***

Institution	Total Faculty	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Participants (n)
Polytechnic College of La Union (PCLU)	63	Full-time and part-time faculty actively teaching during AY 2024–2025	Administrative staff, faculty on leave, and non-teaching personnel	63
Philippine College of Northwestern Luzon (PCNL)	51	Full-time and part-time faculty actively teaching during AY 2024–2025	Administrative staff, faculty on leave, and non-teaching personnel	51
Total	**114**			**114**

Data Gathering Tools

The primary data-gathering instruments for this study were a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms and a semi-structured interview guide. Both instruments were developed from an extensive review of relevant literature, national legal

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frameworks on gender equality, and prior empirical studies on GAD awareness.

To establish content and face validity, the draft questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by two validators from the academe. The validators examined each item for relevance and appropriateness of the response formats. Their comments were documented and used to revise item phrasing.

After expert revision, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 25 faculty members from the Philippine College of Northwestern Luzon who met the study's inclusion criteria. Internal consistency for the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating good internal consistency for the scales used in the study.

The semi-structured interview guide underwent the same expert review and was refined to ensure the probes elicited rich, focused data on the challenges faculty encounter in implementing GAD-related practices. Ten key informants, five from each institution, were later interviewed using the finalized guide.

To protect the integrity of the main dataset, the 25 pilot participants were not included in the final analytic sample.

To determine the level of awareness of the faculty members of two respective institutions related to the different GAD issues, the following scale was used:

1 - Not Aware	This rating indicates that the respondent has no prior knowledge or exposure to the concept or issue being asked. It reflects a complete lack of awareness.
2 - Moderately Aware	This rating indicates minimal awareness, where the respondent has heard of the concept or issue but possesses limited understanding and cannot explain it in detail.
3 – Aware	This rating indicates a satisfactory level of awareness. Respondents understand the concept or issue, can recognize its importance, and demonstrate familiarity with it.
4 - Fully Aware	This rating indicates the highest level of awareness. Respondents not only know and understand the concept but can also articulate it clearly and possibly apply it in practice.

Data Gathering Procedures

Before collecting data, the researcher obtained the necessary ethical clearance and approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the two relevant Higher Education Institutions. This ensured that the rights, confidentiality, and welfare of the respondents were protected during the study. Once approval was secured, the researcher coordinated with the Polytechnic College of La Union and the Philippine College of Northwestern Luzon to formally request permission to conduct the survey among their faculty members.

Participants were recruited through official announcements shared via institutional communication channels, such as faculty group chats, email lists, and bulletin postings. Participation was entirely voluntary. Faculty members were informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained electronically before they completed the questionnaire.

The main research tool was a structured survey questionnaire, which was created using Google Forms to reach more people and make access easier. The questionnaire link was sent directly to eligible faculty members, allowing them to complete it at their convenience. To encourage higher response rates, gentle reminders were sent through follow-up messages two weeks after the initial distribution. Data collection lasted about four weeks. Afterward, the responses were gathered, organized, and prepared for statistical analysis.

To improve the validity and reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in gender, development, and educational research.

Their feedback was included in the final revision of the instrument. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of faculty members who were not part of the actual study. The results of the pilot test were analyzed for reliability, showing acceptable values for internal consistency. This confirmed that the tool was appropriate for the study.

Treatment of Data

To analyze the data, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and ranks were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Measures of central tendency, specifically the median, were applied to determine the overall awareness levels of faculty members regarding various indicators of Gender and Development (GAD).

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For inferential analysis, the Mann–Whitney U Test, a non-parametric statistical tool, was applied to determine whether there were significant differences between the two independent groups of respondents, faculty members from the Polytechnic College of La Union and the Philippine College of Northwestern Luzon.

Also, the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with key informants were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. This approach involved: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, (2) generating initial codes by systematically identifying significant features of the data, (3) searching for themes by grouping codes into broader patterns, (4) reviewing themes to ensure consistency and coherence with the coded data, (5) defining and naming themes to capture the essence of each, and (6) producing the report by integrating themes with the study's objectives and supporting them with verbatim excerpts.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, ensuring both breadth and depth in addressing the study objectives.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study began, the researcher obtained ethical clearance and necessary approvals from the relevant research ethics committees and the administration of both participating higher education institutions. This process ensured that the research followed established ethical standards and protected the welfare, rights, and dignity of the participants. The approval served as formal assurance that the recruitment, data collection, and analysis procedures aimed to minimize risks and maintain professional integrity.

To further protect participants, an informed consent form was provided before data collection. This form explained the study's purpose, the nature of participation, and the approximate time needed to complete the survey. It also clearly stated participants' rights, including the right to ask questions, seek clarification, or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. By electronically signing or confirming consent through the Google Form, participants acknowledged that they understood the study and agreed to participate voluntarily.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly upheld. The survey did not require any personally identifiable information, and all responses were coded and stored securely. Only the researcher and authorized advisers had access to the raw data. Results were reported in aggregate form to prevent identifying individual participants. This practice ensured that personal opinions and responses could not be traced back to any specific faculty member, thus protecting their professional reputation and privacy.

The principle of voluntary participation was emphasized throughout the study. Faculty members were reminded that participation was entirely optional and that refusing to participate or withdrawing from the study would not affect their employment, academic standing, or relationship with their institutions. This assurance was critical in preventing any undue influence, coercion, or perceived obligation to participate in the research.

Finally, the study took special precautions for vulnerable groups. While the research focused on faculty members rather than minors or high-risk populations, it was clearly stated that no respondent would face harm, discrimination, or undue burden during the research. If any faculty members identified as part of marginalized or vulnerable populations, additional ethical protections, such as careful handling of sensitive data and enhanced privacy safeguards, were implemented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed that most of the respondents were male, between 31 and 40 years old, and relatively new in the teaching profession with 0–5 years of service, primarily working in private higher education institutions. Although many respondents had attended at least one Gender and Development (GAD)-related training course, a significant number reported limited or no structured exposure to such programs.

The quantitative results indicated that faculty respondents generally possessed a high level of awareness of GAD principles across the seven indicators. The highest awareness was observed in gender equality and equity, education and awareness, and health and well-being, which suggests that faculty are relatively more knowledgeable about equity concerns, curricular integration of gender issues, and gender-sensitive health services. On the other hand, awareness was lower in inclusive policy development, gender-responsive governance, and participation in leadership and politics, reflecting gaps in policy engagement, governance mechanisms, and equitable leadership opportunities.

Further statistical analysis revealed that age significantly influenced awareness in the areas of eliminating gender-based violence, inclusive policy development, education and awareness, and health and well-being, with older respondents exhibiting higher awareness levels. In contrast, gender, length of service, and number of GAD trainings attended did not yield significant differences in awareness, indicating that these factors had limited influence. The type of institution, however, was found to

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significantly affect awareness around participation in leadership and politics, underscoring differences in institutional culture and leadership structures across colleges and universities.

The qualitative analysis complemented these findings and revealed three overarching challenges encountered by respondents in GAD implementation. First, persistent gender stereotypes and cultural barriers continue to limit equal participation, with male faculty and students often occupying leadership roles and female or LGBTQ+ members facing implicit bias. Second, weak institutional mechanisms and inconsistent policy implementation were identified, as many respondents noted that existing GAD policies are poorly communicated, weakly enforced, or treated merely as compliance requirements. Third, limited sustainability of gender programs and support systems was highlighted, with challenges such as insufficient budget allocations, irregular activities, lack of mentorship, and weak follow-up mechanisms restricting the continuity of GAD initiatives. These findings collectively suggest that while faculty members demonstrate high awareness of GAD principles, significant structural, cultural, and institutional barriers persist, thereby limiting the effective implementation and sustainability of gender-responsive programs in private higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that the respondents were mostly male, between the ages of 31 and 40, relatively new to teaching, and primarily from private universities. Men are often encouraged to pursue higher education and teaching roles that give them authority and prestige and are settled in their profession, often seeking stability.

The study also concludes that faculty members in private higher education institutions generally possess a high level of awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts, particularly in the areas of gender equality and equity, education and awareness, and health and well-being. Many private universities and colleges integrate GAD concepts into faculty development programs, seminars, and workshops. However, awareness was comparatively lower in gender-responsive governance, inclusive policy development, and participation in leadership and politics, indicating that these areas remain underdeveloped in institutional practices.

Results further showed that age significantly affects awareness in relation to eliminating gender-based violence, policy development, education, and health and well-being. Conversely, gender, length of service, and number of trainings attended were not significant factors influencing GAD awareness. The type of institution was significant only in relation to participation in leadership and politics, highlighting that organizational context influences inclusivity in governance.

The qualitative findings confirmed that despite the generally high level of awareness, challenges persist in the implementation of GAD programs. These include deeply rooted stereotypes and cultural barriers, weak institutional mechanisms and inconsistent policy application, as well as limited sustainability of gender-responsive programs.

Overall, the conclusions affirm that while progress has been made in raising GAD awareness among faculty, institutional and structural gaps continue to hinder full integration of GAD principles in higher education. Sustained leadership development, stronger institutional mechanisms, and long-term program support are necessary to ensure that gender equality initiatives move beyond awareness toward meaningful practice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Develop focused training and capacity-building programs that meet the specific needs of different age groups. Since age significantly affects awareness in eliminating gender-based violence, policy development, education, and health, age-responsive strategies should be prioritized to ensure inclusivity in understanding and practicing GAD principles among faculty members.
2. Strengthen GAD implementation across various institutions by standardizing policy frameworks and creating ways for fair leadership and political participation. This addresses the finding that the type of institution greatly influences awareness related to leadership and politics.
3. Provide ongoing legal and technical training for faculty and stakeholders to improve their ability to handle GAD-related issues and complex cases. This addresses the challenge of limited legal knowledge and lack of formal training among respondents.
4. Establish safeguards and clear processes to reduce external pressures and undue influence in GAD-related decision-making. This directly responds to the finding that respondents viewed pressure and influence as obstacles to implementing GAD initiatives.
5. Create stronger enforcement and monitoring systems to ensure compliance with GAD policies and foster active cooperation from stakeholders. This recommendation tackles the reported lack of cooperation and limited enforcement power in GAD implementation.
6. Adopt the Gender-Responsive Leadership and Development Program as an institutional framework to close awareness gaps, address training needs, and strengthen governance structures in support of sustainable GAD implementation. This will build on the generally high awareness found in the study while institutionalizing practices to ensure the continuity and sustainability

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of GAD program.

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